Why is school belonging important?

- Social experiences are important when thinking about academic belonging (Hausmann et al., 2007).
- A sense of belonging relates to whom and how often students interact with peers (Locks et al., 2008).
- Connections with peers has social and cognitive benefits, and relates to greater academic performance (Blatchford, Pellegrini, & Baines, 2016).

Why do we expect racial differences?

- In recent studies, first-year students of color (namely African American, Asian Pacific American, and Hispanic/Latino students) reported lower levels of belonging on their campuses than did white students (Johnson et al., 2007).
- Peers appear to be particularly important for Latinos/Hispanics students (Johnson, et. al., 2007).
- African-American students experience relatively greater uncertainty about their belonging in school. These results suggest that members of ethnic/racial minority groups are uncertain about the quality of their social bonds in academic settings (Walton & Cohen, 2007).
- African American have been found to report lower sense of belonging on days of high stress (Walton & Cohen, 2007).
- Black/African American and multi-cultural/multi-ethnic women have reported a significant correlation between overall sense of belonging and positive perceptions of the campus racial climate.
- White women have reported stronger overall sense of belonging and fewer interactions with peers from different racial/ethnic groups (Johnson, 2011).

Hypothesis: There will be a higher sense of academic belonging with peers, administrative personnel, and faculty members among white university students than among university students of color.

Academic Belonging Measure 3 items (Strayhorn, 2012)

- Rate your relationships with other students at your university from lowest = 1 (remote, discouraging, unsympathetic) to highest=7 (approachable, understanding, encouraging)
- Rate your relationships with administrative personnel and offices at your university from lowest = 1 (rigid, impersonal, bound by regulations) to highest=7 (helpful, considerate, flexible).
- Rate your relationships with faculty members at your university from lowest= 1 (remote, discouraging, unsympathetic) to highest= 7 (approachable, understanding, encouraging)

Results

We conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine mean-level differences in belonging by race/ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with...</th>
<th>White (n = 161)</th>
<th>African American / Black (n = 21)</th>
<th>Latino (n = 35)</th>
<th>Asian (n = 31)</th>
<th>Multiracial (n = 34)</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>5.87&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.19&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.00&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.00&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.06&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>F (4, 281) = 7.52, p &lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>4.44&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.71&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.11&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.39&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.68&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>F (4, 281) = .83, p = .51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>5.27&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.05&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.74&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.90&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.26&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>F (4, 281) = 1.88, p = .11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means that do not share a subscript within a row are significantly different from one another, p < .05

- The results indicated that there were significant race/ethnicity differences in academic belonging in regards to relationships peers.
- White participants reported greater belonging than Latino, Asian, and Multiracial/ethnic participants.
- The results indicated that there were no significant differences by race/ethnicity in academic belonging in regards to relationships faculty and administrators.

Conclusions and Implications

- Our findings indicated that race/ethnicity did play a role in academic belonging specific to peer relationships.
- Latino, Asian, and Multiracial/ethnic students experienced the lowest academic belonging specific to peer relationships.
- Contrary to our hypothesis, however, students’ race/ethnicity did not play a role in their relationships with faculty or administrators. Notably, across all groups, the overall mean for relationships with administrators was low.
- Academic institutions should take initiative to increase academic belonging among peers with programs that target racial/ethnic minorities.
- Recommendations for future programs might include an increase in academic belonging amongst all students by improving faculty and administrator relationships with students.
- Previous research shows that the development of strong student-faculty relationships can lessen the feelings of a negative campus climate and help to create a more inclusive campus community (Cress, 2008).

Acknowledgements

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